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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001301

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BNEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN  
TREASURY FOR J. RALYEA  
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON  
USDOJ/FWS FOR RICHARD RUGGIERO

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TAGS: [SENV](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [KIDE](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: TRANS-FRONTIER PARK UPDATE

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) Since assuming the coordinating role in the Great Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park (GLTP) in January 2005, the GOZ has neither coordinated with stakeholders nor taken adequate steps to develop the infrastructure in Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park. While fast-track land reform and land tenure uncertainty stymie Zimbabwe's active participation in the tri-country initiative, South Africa and Mozambique are pressing ahead. Save Valley Conservancy (SVC) and the Malilangwe Trust (each of which include U.S. citizen principals) have offered to use their international contacts and access to capital to help finance the Park's infrastructure development through a Public Private Community Partnership. In return, the conservancies want secure land title and GOZ assistance in resettling squatters off the protected land. The passage of the Constitutional Amendments Bill on August 30, however, further jeopardizes the conservancies, property rights and creates an environment of uncertainty around public private initiatives to develop the Trans-Frontier Park under GOZ leadership. End Summary.

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As Zimbabwe Stalls, South Africa and Mozambique Act  
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2. (SBU) The Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, along with the Kruger National Park in South Africa and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, comprise the 100,000 square kilometer GLTP ) one of the biggest wildlife sanctuaries in Africa. Chairman of the National Parks and Wildlife Authority George Pangeti told Econoff on August 18 that infrastructure development at Gonarezhou was progressing rapidly. The Authority had a GLTP coordinator in place who was consulting with stakeholders. In addition, the GOZ had decided to move settlers out of the Park after their harvest season. Pangeti stated categorically that the GOZ had decided to include the SVC and Malilangwe Trust in the GLTP. He dismissed the Trusts' concerns about land tenure security.

3. (SBU) According to University of Zimbabwe Environment Professor David Cummings, Zimbabwe has not built adequate tourism infrastructure for the development of the GLTP. Continued confusion over land tenure rights and the failure of the GOZ to move settlers out of Gonarezhou have frustrated any significant progress. Raoul DuToit of the World Wildlife Fund told Econoff in August that formal local and national structures and institutions were in place for effective development of Gonarezhou but the GOZ had failed to coordinate, make decisions, or push the process forward.

4. (SBU) In the same vein, Giuseppe DaConto of CESVI (the Italian counterpart to USAID, which has been funding development projects in Gonarezhou) complained to Econoff that the GOZ had not consulted with stakeholders adequately, a concern echoed by Cummings, DuToit, and Clive Stockil of the SVC. All three compared the Zimbabwean coordinator's inaction unfavorably to the steady dialogue that took place under Mozambique's leadership in 2004.

5. (SBU) Cummings told PolOff (and DaConto later confirmed) that South Africa and Mozambique were moving ahead with their GLTP development plans. The two countries have recently torn down fences and opened a bridge between the Kruger and Limpopo National Parks.

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Zimbabwe Private Sector Willing to Assist . . .  
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6. (SBU) Weldon Schenck, an American investor in the SVC,

told Econoff on August 23 that Environment and Tourism Minister Francis Nhema had approved a Public Private Community Partnership (PPCP) Trust including the National Parks, SVC, Malilangwe, and the local communities living in and around Gonarezhou. The Trust could tap the private conservancies, access to capital and international connections to finance tourism concessions in the GLTP. Tourism would generate a return on private investment and an income stream for local communities in exchange for their commitment to refrain from subsistence poaching. Schenck and Stockil told Econoff they hoped to leverage their willingness to help the GOZ with GLTP infrastructure development to gain secure land tenure.

17. (SBU) As part of this plan, DuToit explained to Econoff, the GOZ would allocate ten concessions in Gonarezhou to develop tourism facilities. The PPCP Trust would be guaranteed two of these concessions and could bid on more. However, DuToit expressed concern that the GOZ would hand out the tenders within its patronage network rather than to parties dedicated to sustainable tourism development. There were some indications that this had indeed happened, he said, although tender winners had not yet been named officially. Pangeti, in a separate meeting, adamantly denied that the National Parks would grant concessions to anyone but conservation minded individuals.

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. . . But Might Have Lost Bargaining Power  
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18. (SBU) On August 30, the Parliament of Zimbabwe passed the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Bills (reftel) that, among other things, granted title to the government of all agricultural properties previously designated for acquisition by the GOZ. Since all the properties in the SVC and Malilangwe Trust have received notices of designation for acquisition, the GOZ could acquire them at any time. As a practical matter, however, whether or how quickly the GOZ will act to remove or take control over privately held wildlife areas remains to be seen.

19. (SBU) According to Stockil, the SVC,s property rights are unclear. Although designated for agriculture, the GOZ is re-categorizing the area for tourism/wildlife use but had not yet confirmed the change. Stockil planned to move forward with the Public Private Community Partnership Trust and present it to the highest levels of the GOZ. He said the SVC had nothing to gain by forcing an immediate GOZ decision on the status of its land tenure but could indirectly influence the outcome if the GOZ agreed to the conservancy,s proposal to develop the GLTP and help the local rural communities.

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Comment  
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110. (SBU) Land tenure insecurity and an extremely unfavorable investment climate are driving international investment away from an otherwise exciting regional wildlife park. Nonetheless, private conservancies with an established stake in the Park have been willing to help the GOZ attract investment in exchange for secure land tenure. Passage of the Constitutional Amendment Bill, however, has cast yet another layer of uncertainty over the conservancies, property rights and their ability to engage the GOZ in an effective development partnership. The GOZ,s instincts to allocate resources through its patronage system and its penchant for taking self-destructive action do not bode well for its vibrant participation in this regional wildlife park. Perhaps the best hope is that the GOZ may recognize the potential for increased tourism revenue and allow a rational approach to developing the park to prevail, but the evidence thus far does not favor an optimistic outlook.

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